

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MANAGU 03780 161644Z
ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00
PA-01 ICA-11 SP-02 COME-00 EB-08 LAB-04 SIL-01
HEW-04 /056 W
-----108281 180230Z /62

R 161505Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7454
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINS, SWEL, ELAB, NU
SUBJECT: HOSPITAL WORKERS STRIKE

1. NOW IN ITS 24TH DAY, A STRIKE OF HOSPITAL WORKERS
APPEARS HEADED FOR INDEFINITE CONTINUANCE. THE IMPETUS
FOR THIS STRIKE WAS A CALL FOR INCREASED WAGES AND FRINGE
BENEFITS BY THE WORKERS. THE STRIKE HAS BEEN PEACEFUL
AND ORDERLY.

2. FETASALUD (FEDERATION OF HEALTH WORKERS), WHICH
REPRESENTS ALL HOSPITAL WORKERS NATION-WIDE, SUFFERED
INITIAL DIFFICULTY IN GETTING THE STRIKE OFF THE GROUND.
FETASALUD IS AFFILIATED WITH THE CTN. ON 21 JULY,
FOURTEEN PUBLIC HOSPITALS AND CLINICS CEASED ALL BUT
EMERGENCY OPERATIONS. A DISPUTE IMMEDIATELY AROSE OVER
WHO REPRESENTED THE STRIKERS. THE NATIONAL HEALTH
ASSISTANCE BOARD (JNAPS) AND THE SOCIAL SECURITY
INSTITUTE (INSS), WHO ADMINISTER ALL PUBLIC HOSPITALS
AND CLINICS, AT FIRST RECOGNIZED A NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE
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WHICH INCLUDED FORMER MEMBERS OF THE UNION'S LEADERSHIP.
THESE FORMER LEADERS HAD BEEN VOTED OUT OF OFFICE AND
WERE VIEWED BY THE CURRENT LEADERSHIP AS PRO-GON.
FOR APPROXIMATELY ONE WEEK, THIS CONTROVERSY IMPEDED
ANY ATTEMPT AT NEGOTIATION. FINALLY, A NEGOTIATING
COMMITTEE ACCEPTABLE TO THE UNION WAS RECOGNIZED.

3. AMIDST ALLEGATIONS (NEVER SUBSTANTIATED) THAT ILL AND INJURED PATIENTS WERE BEING REMOVED FROM HOSPITALS BY THE AUTHORITIES, THE NEGOTIATIONS BEGAN. FETASALUD DEMANDED 100 PERCENT SALARY INCREASES, WITH INCREASED BENEFITS SUCH AS BETTER MEALS, MORE UNIFORMS, ETC. THE AUTHORITIES (INTERESTINGLY, THE MINISTER OF LABOR IS VICE-PRESIDENT OF JNAPS) COUNTERED WITH A 10 PERCENT OFFER. AS MORE AND MORE PUBLIC HEALTH CENTERS JOINED THE STRIKE, FETASALUD AND THE AUTHORITIES EVENTUALLY MADE OFFERS OF 55 PERCENT AND 16 PERCENT, RESPECTIVELY. CITING BUDGETARY CONSTRAINTS, THE JNAPS AND INNS HAVE STATED THAT A 16 PERCENT SALARY INCREASE WOULD MEAN AN ADDITIONAL COST OF THIRTY-ONE MILLION CORDOBAS (APPROXIMATELY 4.35 MILLION DOLLARS) ANNUALLY.

4. WITH A RESOLUTION OF THE STRIKE NOT IN SIGHT, TWO NEW ELEMENTS HAVE ENTERED INTO THE EQUATION. BEGINNING 14 AUGUST, THE CONSTRUCTION WORKERS BEGAN A PREVIOUSLY-THREATENED SYMPATHY STRIKE IN SUPPORT OF FETASALUD. IT IS UNCLEAR TO WHAT EXTENT THIS STRIKE IS SUCCESSFUL. ADDITIONALLY, EL CENTROAMERICANO (LEON), REPORTED IN ITS 14 AUGUST ISSUE THAT FETASALUD IS CONSIDERING THE SUSPENSION OF EMERGENCY SERVICES--A PROSPECT IMPLYING THE DENIAL OF ALL PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES TO THE PUBLIC--TO INCREASE PRESSURE UPON THE JNAPS AND INNS.

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5. COMMENT:THIS NATIONAL HOSPITAL STRIKE WOULD HAVE BEEN A SENSATIONAL STORY HAD IT OCCURRED A YEAR AGO. NOW, IT IS MERELY ONE MORE EXAMPLE OF THE WIDESPREAD DISAFFECTION PERVADING NICARAGUA. THE MOST ENCOURAGING ASPECT OF THE STRIKE IS ITS PEACEFULNESS. BOTH STRIKERS AND GN HAVE ACTED WITH RESTRAINT. ASIDE FROM PUBLIC DECLARATIONS, THE WORKERS HAVE LIMITED THEIR ACTIVITY TO COLLECTING DONATIONS IN THE STREETS. THEY HAVE NOT ATTEMPTED TO DISRUPT TRAFFIC OR ACCESS TO THE HEALTH ESTABLISHMENTS. THE GN HAS NOT ATTEMPTED TO IMPEDE THESE COLLECTIONS AND, GENERALLY, HAS NOT BEEN SEEN NEAR THE HEALTH CENTERS.
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Message Attributes

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